



Natomas Oral Histories

2015/027

Oral interview of

Frank J. Machado

discussing farm equipment on display at his ranch

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This is not a verbatim transcript. Parts of the interview have been paraphrased.

This interview took place at Frank J. Machado's ranch during the Natomas Historical Society's annual historic tour. Located on Airport Road off San Juan Boulevard, it was the last of the Machado family homestead that had not been sold for development. The NHS worked with the city to keep farm equipment on the property for community educational use. Several others joined the conversation throughout the interview, including Donalda and Tony Vargas, Mary Euphrasia, Mary and Gene Inderkum, Dolores Greenslate, and Jim Henley. The tape ends with a short clip of Councilman Ray Tretheway speaking.

Anne: We are on the annual historical tour of the Natomas Historical Society. We're trying to get some bits and pieces from people as we go on our tour this year. *[To Frank Machado]* Hi. Thank you for being able to be here. Have you met Jim Henley from the archives *[Center for Sacramento History]*? This is Frank J. Machado.

Jim: Hi.

Frank: Hi.

[00:00:31]

Anne: Thank you for being out here. Ok, shall we get started?

Frank: Sure, whatever you guys want to do.

Anne: Let's talk about this one first. Oh, I don't know if we can hear, can we?

Frank: A bale loader just to pick up bales in the field. You tie it onto a truck.

Anne: Oh.

Frank: The bales just come up and you hand load them. My mother spent a lot of time driving trucks and loading bales with that.

Anne: Ok, so this is a bale loader. And then—

[00:01:05]

Frank: This is an old John Deere little buck rake.

Anne: Oh, is this what a buck rake looks like?

Frank: No, actually, I don't want to tell them wrong. Tony *[Vargas]*, you tell them. Tony. Where did he go? Tony what do you call that rig? What kind of rig is this?

Tony: It is a dump rake that makes windrows with it.

Anne: You make windrows with this tool, this piece of machinery.

Frank: Yes, right, exactly. We should go now to the other end, start there, and come back.

Anne: Ok, ok. Frank, is your sister *[Linda]* here? I thought she had signed up.

Frank: No, no. A friend from her church — her father died, so—

Anne: Oh, ok.

[00:02:09]

Frank: This is one of the most interesting things here.

Unidentified female (possibly Donalda Silva Vargas): We were just looking at it.

Frank: It is something my father made up to cut hay. It is either a Studebaker or a Star. We think a Studebaker that they put in reverse. This is the front end. That is the sickle that would cut hay. If you look real closely, there are three transmissions on it. One for the cutting apparatus, two — I'm not exactly sure — but to go in reverse, in order to go faster you put another transmission on to gear it up.

[00:02:53]

Unidentified female (possibly Donalda Silva Vargas): *[Laughter]* Oh my gosh. What is this one over here?

Frank: This is a header off a bean harvester.

Unidentified female (possibly Donalda Silva Vargas): Oh, to harvest beans. I knew it was some kind of harvester, but I didn't know what. Beans.

Frank: Yes, the header — it went right into that hole there. It would go through the machine, it would come out on the top there where you see, underneath what should have been the canopy. There is two little sack holders. They would fill up one sack and then switch it over to the other sack, tie it, and then drop it down the little chute on the other side.

Unidentified male: So, your dad made this himself?

Frank: Yes, my dad made it himself. My uncle said it was because they had some fields with Bermuda that the other ones just wouldn't cut. Normally, they would have a Buick driving in probably the right direction, and have a tail mower on the back of it. Tony would probably know more about it. Where's Tony?

Anne: Hey, Tony!

[00:03:51]

Tony: *[Looking at another piece of equipment]* This is a mower here? I thought it was a buck rake. You don't have a buck rake?

Frank: No, no.

Tony: Oh, I thought you had a buck rake. I'm sorry.

Anne: We'll have to go to your shop for that, Tony.

Frank: This is an old self-tying baler — not self-tying. No, it is a manual tying baler. It's all in pieces here. I haven't put it together. That piece came across here — this was the feeder that went up in this direction. There were actually two seats on the side and people would put wire through it and tie it. Sort of similar to a 5 wire baler which Donalda (Silva Vargas) could tell you more about. I've never seen one. She said she worked around them.

Anne: Oh, these are wonderful! Wow!

Frank: *[Laughter]* Lots of rust, like I said.

Anne: Oh, it is wonderful.

Frank: Yes. These are our choice ones. You should see the ones that are not so choice! *[Laughter]*

Donalda: I can imagine.

Frank: You might want to stay over here. It's pretty muddy right here.

Anne: Ok.

Frank: If you really want to get muddy, go over there.

Anne: No thank you.

Frank: Here's another example of it. Hey Alan! How's it going? That is a neighbor, John Singh's brother.

Anne: Ok.

[00:05:22]

Frank: This is the Oliver Harvester. From this side, you can see it. That is where they did the beans there on the two chutes and then drop it down this chute here. They would either land in the field or they pulled them up and then they would go around and pick them up, so I understand.

Anne: This was for beans?

Frank: Yes, a bean harvester.

Dolores Greenslate: They would weigh the sacks. That was what my grandfather used to do. They would weigh the beans.

Anne: What kind of beans?

Dolores: They would tap it down and they would have a scale up there so then they would weigh them.

Frank: I guess. I'm not sure.

Anne: Well, it could be any type of bean, I guess.

Unidentified female: How old is it?

Frank: I'm not really sure. They made different kinds. The Singhs had an all-wood one. They ended up selling it to someone to restore. You mainly see the metal ones, though, like this. What year, I don't know. The way it was driven — actually those were cork, like pulleys, and there was a big belt that went to the back, similar to the belt which is back there, but much bigger. Then this engine would drive it. How they pulled it, I'm not sure.

Unidentified female: That looks like a 1920s.

[00:06:38]

Unidentified female (possibly Mary Euphrasia): Where are your horses?

Frank: Oh, we only have one left. He's out there in the pasture. *[Laughter]*

Unidentified female (possibly Mary Euphrasia): Oh. Still racing? Is he a racer?

Frank: No, no. He's an eater.

Unidentified female: How long has this property been farmed?

Frank: Well, my parents bought 150 acres in 1945, and I believe some of my — my grandfather and his brothers had dry-farmed portions of this acreage out here.

Anne: We'll have to try to get an oral history.

Frank: I don't know that much.

Anne: So this thing—

Frank: These pieces actually go together.

Anne: Oh good. I'll wait until the others get here. Thank you for doing this.

Frank: Oh sure.

[00:07:26]

Unidentified female: Is this a plow?

Frank: That was a ditcher. This is a ripper. It is an implement that can carry different implements. It's a McCormack John Deere and has a ripper on it, and you could also put that ditcher on it. This was before you had hydraulic ditchers. You just pull back on the rod, tie a rope to it, you pull back on it — these little hooks go in there and catch on to the wheels and it picks it up. You turn it around and drop it down again.

Anne: Wow. How about this?

Frank: This is an old grader. I can't remember the name on it. I should have checked it.

Anne: So this is an old grader. So it leveled the land?

Frank: No. After you put ditches in and you want to fill in a ditch and to level a road. That is what you use a grader for.

Anne: Oh.

[00:08:34]

Frank: This thing here — I was trying to wave over Alan Singh — this is a rolling disc. It has disc blades on it. John Singh's father bought this long time before they even had choppers, I guess. He'd grown some real tall vetch and couldn't get it under with a regular disc. This was able to cut it and get it underneath. Tony probably knows more about it.

Anne: Wow, big! Tony, do you know about this?

Frank: Tony, come over here and help.

Tony: What?

Anne: Do you know about this?

Frank: Come on!

Tony: This plow worked for really hard ground. Otherwise you'd use the other plow over there. It went deep.

Anne: So a plow for really hard ground, for deep digging.

Donald: —4 years old, maybe 5, he said, "Don't do that, you're going to cut your finger off!" Boing! It cut the tip of his finger off!

Frank: She's good. She remembers these things! I can't remember things from the fourth grade!
[Laughter]

Anne: I know. She's wonderful! Ok, here.

[00:09:58]

Frank: This is a regular John Deere plow. There are lots and lots of those around.

Anne: But it's green.

Unidentified female: Green with yellow — those are John Deere colors.

Anne: Oh, ok.

Unidentified female: The one over there, I think I know what that is.

Frank: The dump rake? This is a John Deere dump rake.

Anne: Ok. What is this one? It is a John Deere dump rake.

Frank: Not buck — you don't want to confuse it with a buck rake, as Tony pointed out, because buck rakes were used with 5-wire balers. There is a whole history behind that.

Anne: Oh. What does a dump rake do, we're asked?

Frank: Well, say you cut the field and you would normally cut it with a sickle mower at that time. Something like what was on there, only by that time they had John Deeres and it was just a trailing mower. It would all be lying flat across the field. You'd go across the field and you'd pick it up when you wanted to make a windrow.

Anne: Oh.

Frank: So depending on how thick the hay was in a check — in any given check, or regard to old hay where there aren't checks — you just make a row. Just keep picking it up. You go to the end of the row and come up the other way, and you just line up the rows as you go.

Unidentified female (possibly Mary Inderkum): And after that, they would start picking up with the rakes and put it in a wagon and then take it to the barn where there was a yardarm over the hay in the wagon. It would pick it up, bring it into the barn, and drop it.

Anne: So those round lever things, those round wheel things, they would pick it up and move it into the barn.

Unidentified female (possibly Mary Inderkum): There was a hole, and a thing came out from that hole, which was up in the top of the barn and it would grab—

Anne: —the bale.

Unidentified female (possibly Mary Inderkum): No. It was loose. It would pick it up and take it into the barn and drop it.

Anne: It was all loose? Wouldn't fire — you could have a fire—

Unidentified female (possibly Mary Inderkum): No. It was dry.

Anne: Ok.

[00:12:49]

Frank: Of course, that is your manure spreader that every good farm had. *[Laughter]*

Anne: Which one?

Frank: That wagon-like one. That is a manure spreader. This is an old seeder here.

Gene Inderkum: We used to supply them a lot of manure, too.

Frank: The Inderkums' Dairy was a good supplier. *[Laughter]*

Dolores: They put it on a wagon. You'd get the shovels, and they would just shovel it on the land. That's modern right there.

Anne: It is?

Dolores: Oh yes, you didn't have that in the very old days.

Anne: Oh ok. It all looks old to me.

Frank: I don't know how old that is.

Dolores: All in comparison, you know.

Anne: Sure.

END OF INTERVIEW WITH FRANK J. MACHADO

[00:13:54]

Councilman Ray Tretheway: So that's the working principle between the city and county. So that we can preserve these lands in perpetuity as many of you, some for decades, have known them. We haven't finished the work yet, but that is the principle of the vision. One mile along the river, Sacramento River, would remain in open space controlled by eight public agencies, and then above Elkhorn Boulevard, east of 99. Maybe in another decade they would open that up for future development.